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May exhume body in CIA probe

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Queens District Attorney John Santucci may file an application to exhume the body of a 41-year-old Middle Village, Queens, man whose mysterious death last month has been linked to a securities scandal that forced the resignation of the CIA's master spy, Max C. Hugel, the Daily News learned yesterday.

At the center of the mystery is Dennis McNell, who died June 1, just two weeks before his two brothers, Samuel and Thomas, dropped out of sight—along with \$3 million in corporate assets.

The FBI confirmed yesterday that it has opened a nationwide search for Samuel and Thomas McNell, respectively the president of and consultant to the Triad Energy Corp. of 111 Broadway. In late May of this year, the two men provided The Washington Post with details of an alleged improper 1974 stock manipulation involving Hugel, who earlier this year was named the CIA's director of clandestine operations.

When the brothers' charges were published, Hugel immediately resigned his CIA post.

THE DEATH OF Dennis McNell, who was an employe of Triad, was originally recorded as being the result of natural causes. But it took on mysterious overtones Wednesday when the Chicago Tribune reported, in a copyrighted story, that he had been "abducted and beaten" twice earlier this year.

The Tribune reported that Stanley Keilmar, a director of Triad, said he had told the FBI he believes the alleged beatings were "a warning for the McNells to cool it with Hugel." Keilmar said he had heard of the alleged beatings—one in April or May and the other shortly before McNell's death—from an unidentified source in New York.

On the evening of May 31, after he had eaten

He complained to his wife, Jean, of severe abdominal pain, but reportedly refused to allow her to call a doctor. Later, however, he collapsed, and was rushed to City Hospital Center in Elmhurst, Queens, where he died at 6:30 the next morning as he was being prepared for surgery.

SANTUCCI SAID only that he has been "in contact with other agencies in regard to the death of Dennis McNell."

"I am looking into it," Santucci said.

Jean McNell says doctors told her shortly before her husband's death that their diagnosis showed his condition was the result of a ruptured spleen.

The Tribune interviewed Dr. Stewart Resch, chief of emergency room surgery at the hospital center, who said that any case involving the rupture of a nondiseased spleen "would be suspicious," since such a rupture is almost always the result of "trauma."

Yet a doctor, who was not immediately identified, certified that McNell's death was from natural causes, resulting from a possible ruptured spleen, internal bleeding and shock.

JEAN McNELL TOLD the Tribune that her husband, who was a diabetic, had never told her about any beatings. But she did say that his behavior had been strange of late. Usually, she said, he was completely open with her, but "during the last six months, he just sort of clammed up. Whenever I asked him what was wrong, he would say everything was okay, not to worry."

Near Easter, she said, her husband gave their 16-year-old son an envelope containing "a few thousand dollars" in

"emergency money," saying that "he might be going away soon, but that there was nothing to worry about."

Dr. Elliot Gross, the city's chief medical examiner, said he saw no reason to seek an exhumation order for McNell's body, which was buried in Maine.

"There was no allegation made at the time of the death concerning any history of an assault at any time," Gross said. "On the basis of everything presented to date, it (death) doesn't appear to result from injuries."

The FBI got jurisdiction in the disappearances last week after directors for Triad reported \$3 million had been mysteriously withdrawn from its bank account, a spokesman said.

Meanwhile, Kenneth Walton, deputy assistant director in charge of the FBI's New York office, said the bureau's investigation into the disappearances of Samuel and Thomas McNell could lead it to inquire into the circumstances surrounding Dennis McNell's death.

But in Washington, Roger Young, the FBI's chief spokesman, said: "At the moment, there is nothing I'm aware of to link the death of Dennis McNell with the disappearance of his brothers."